

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT LOUIS 0512

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT PGOV PINS MP
SUBJECT: MAURITIUS WEEKLY REVIEW - APRIL 28 - SUMMARY

REF: PORT LOUIS 0494 (DTG 210940Z APR 78)
PORT LOUIS A-36, APRIL 28, 1978

1. THE "REVELATIONS" ABOUT THE STATE SECURITY SERVICE (SSS) IN THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY LAST WEEK BY PAUL BERENGER, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE OPPOSITION MAURITIAN MILITANT MOVEMENT (MMM), CONTINUED TO REVERBERATE THIS WEEK, COMPLETELY DOMINATING THE POLITICAL SCENE. THE LABOR PARTY LEADERSHIP MOUNTED A COUNTER-ATTACK, WHICH CONSISTED MAINLY OF THE CHARGE THAT THE MMM WAS PLOTTING TO SEIZE POWER BY UNCONSTITUTIONAL MEANS. THEY ACCUSED THE MMM OF BEING AN AGENT OF THE SOVIET UNION, WHICH IS TRYING TO DOMINATE THE INDIAN OCEAN, AND CLAIMED THAT A MMM GOVERNMENT
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WOULD CALL IN CUBAN TROOPS TO MAINTAIN ITSELF IN POWER, IN THE PATTERN OF ANGOLA AND ETHIOPIA. LITTLE IN THE WAY OF CREDIBLE EVIDENCE WAS OFFERED TO SUPPORT THIS ATTACK, THOUGH THE PRO GOVERNMENT PRESS PUBLISHED A PICTURE OF BERENGER MEETING WITH THE CUBAN AMBASSADOR TO MADAGASCAR AND SEYCHELLES FOREIGN MINISTER SINON IN THE SYECHELLES RECENTLY. (THIS ENCOUNTER IN THE AIRPORT VIP LONGE TOOK PLACE WHILE BERENGER WAS IN THE SEY-

CHELLES TO HELP ARRANGE THE CURRENTHCONFERENCE OF "PROGRESSIVE FORCES OF THE SOUTHWEST INDIAN OCEAN.") BERENGER SAID THE CUBAN WAS A FRIEND OF HIS, BUT HE AS WELL AS OTHER MMM SPOKESMEN TRIED TO RIDICULE THE LABOR PARTY'S ATTEMPT TO LINK THE OPPOSITION WITH CUBA AND THE SOVIET UNION.

2. THE ASSEMBLY SESSION OF APRIL 25 WAS RATHER SUBDUED, ASO BERENGER AND SOME OTHER KEY MMM FIGURES WERE ABSENT IN THE SEYCHELLES ATTENDING THE CONFERENCE, AND NEW MEASURES HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO CALM THE ATMOSPHERE IN THE ASSEMBLY CHAMBER BY RESTRICTING ACCESS BY THE PUBLIC. AS PROMISED, PRIME MINISTER RAMGOOLAM PERSONALLY ANSWERED BERENGER'S CHARGES ABOUT THE SSS AND AGAIN CATEGORICALLY DENIED THAT THE SOURCE OF THESE CHARGES, SHEIK HOSSEN, HAD EVER HAD ANY ASSOCIATION WITH THE YSS. HE LABELLED THE ALLEGATIONS "FALSE AND MALICIOUS" AND ACCUSED THE MMM OF USING THEM TO TRY TO DEMORALIZE THE POLICE AND SECURITY FORCES IN ORDER TO "DESTABILIZE" THE REGIME AND PAVE THE WAY FOR A TAKEOVER OF THE GOVERNMENT BY FORCE. RAMGOOLAM WENT SO FAR AS TO DEFEND THE PRACTICE OF PLACING UNDER SURVEILLANCE MEMBERS OF POLITICAL PARTIES "WHICH WANT TO TAKE POWER WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF A FOREIGN POWER," AND CAME CLOSE TO LABELLING THE MMM A "COMMUNIST" PARTY.

3. FOR ITS PART THE MMM CONTINUED TO DEMAND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PARLIAMENTARY SELECT COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE THE SSS AS WELL AS A SEPARATE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY HEADED BY A SUPREME CONFIDENTIAL

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COURT JUSTICE. THE MMM ALSO WANTS THE SSS PLACED UNDER PARLIAMENTARY CONTROL. GAETAN DUVAL, LEADER OF THE PMSD COALITION PARTNER OF THE RULING LABOR PARTY, GAVE THREE PRESS INTERVIEWS WHICH WERE NOTABLE FOR THEIR PERSONAL ATTACKS ON RAMGOOLAM, WHOM HE ACCUSED, AMONG OTHER THINGS, OF SUFFERING FROM THE SPCKNESS OF TRUSTING NO ONE, NOT EVEN HIS CLOSEST ASSOCIATES, AND OF USING THE SSS TO SPY ON THEM. DUVAL WAS EQUALLY SEVERE WITH THE MMM, WHICH HE CLAIMED IS OUT TO ESTABLISH A SECRET POLICE STATE WHILE PRETENDING TO BE DISTRESSED BY THE ACTIVITIES OF RAMGOOLAM'S SECRET POLICE.

4. COMMENT: ACCORDING TO RELIABLE GOVERNMENT SOURCES, SHEI HOSSEN'S ALLEGATIONS ARE FRAUDULENT AND HE HAS NEVEG HAD AN ASSOCIATION WITH THE SSS OR ITS PREDECESSOR SPECIAL BRANCH. IT IS THEREFORE STRANGE THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT ATTACKED HIS CREDIBILITY DIRECTLY IN ORDER TO REFUTE HIS CHARGES, REASSURE THE MAURITIAN PUBLIC AND PUT THE NMM ON THE DEFENSIVE. IT WOULD APPEAR THAT RAMGOOLAM FEARS THAT THIS APPGOACH WOULD OPEN THE SSS UP TO PUBLIC SCRUTINY AND CAUSE DISCLOSRES THAT HE WISHES TO AVOID. INSTEAD THE GOVERNMENT AND LABOR PWRTY HAVE CHOSEN TO COUNTER-ATTACK WITH SOME RATHER WILD CHARGES OF THEIR OWN IN AN ATTEMPT TO LINK THE MMM TO THE SOVIET UNION

AND CUBA AND TO MAKE THE PUBLIC BELIEVE THAT THE MMM IS ENGAGED
IN A PLOT TO SEIZE POWER BY FORCE OR SUBVERSION. THIS SEEMS
AN UNWISE TACTIC BECAUSE: (A) IT WILL BE SEEN AS AN ATTEMPT
TO DIVERT ATTENTION FROM HOSSEN'S ALLEGATIONS AND THE SECRET
ACTIVITIES OF THE SSS, AS THE MMM HAS CHARGED; AND (B) WHILE
PARTISANS OF LABOR AND GOVERNMENT SUPPORTERS MAY BELIEVE THE
CHARGES ABOUT THE MMM, THE LATTER PARTY'S ADHERENTS AND NEUTRAL
OBSERVERS WILL PROBABLY NOT BE CONVINCED IN THE ABSENCE OF GOOD
EVIDENCE THAT THE MMM IS PLOTTING THE OVERTHROW OF THE GOVERNMENT
WITH ASSISTANCE FROM ABROAD. IT IS TOO EARLY TO TELL HOW THE
SHEIK HOSSEN AFFAKIR WILL AFFECT THE STRENGTHS OF OPPOSING
POLITICAL FORCES IN MAURITIUS, BUT HE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT
RAMGOOLAM AND COMPANY ARE MISSING A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY TO CUT
BERENGER DOWN TO SIZE, SINCE HIS CREDIBILITY COULD BE SEVERELY
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DAMAGED IN THE PROCESS OF EXPOSING HOSSEN HIMSELF. END COMMENT.
KEELEY

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